

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SEOUL

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - T E X T (P A R A 4 .)

ROME FOR FODAG

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID, BG
SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON FAO CENTER FOR INTERGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (CIRDAP)

REF: STATE 217609

SUMMARY: FOLLOWING ARE MISSION'S COMMENTS ON FAO/CIRDAP
WHICH WILL BE LOCATED AT THE BANGLADESH ACADEMY FOR RURAL
DEVELOPMENT (BARD) AT COMILLA. CIRDAP IN BANGLADESH APPEARS
TO BE A PROMISING VENTURE. HOWEVER IT IS NOT CERTAIN THAT BARD,
WHICH HAS LOST SOME OF ITS FORMER VITALITY, WILL BE ABLE TO
OFFER CIRDAP THE LEVEL OF RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE IT WILL
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NEED. WE SUPPORT U.S. DECISION TO DEFER A COMMITMENT TO
CIRDAP UNTIL WE SEE HOW IT DEVELOPS. (FOR COMMENTS OF U.S.
REPRESENTATIVE TO FAO ON CRDAP AND BARD SEE REFTEL.)
END SUMMARY.

1. THE CONCEPT OF A REGIONAL CENTER FOR EXCHANGING
INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE AMONG AFFILIATED NATIONAL

RURAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTES AND OTHERS AND FOR REGIONAL RESEARCH APPEARS SOUND. BANGLADESH IS A SUITABLE LOCALE. ALTHOUGH IT HAS SOLVED FEW OF ITS RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS, IT FACES MOST OF THE TYPICAL PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY OTHER POOR AGRICULTURAL COUNTRIES IN THE REGION AND THESE PROBLEMS CAN BE STUDIED IN MICROCOSM IN THE COMILLA AREA. ALSO LOCATION AOF CIRDAP ON THE BARD CAMPUS AND AVAILABILITY OF BARD RESOURCES MAY HELP LAUNCH CIRDAP. HOWEVER IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW EFFECTIVELY BARD CAN CONTRIBUTE TO CIRDAP AND HOW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO INSTITUTIONS WILL EVOLVE.

2. WE FIND SOME SKEPTICISM AMONG INFORMED PEOPLE HERE ABOUT BARD AND CIRDAP. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT BARD HAS DECLINED IN VIGOR AND EFFECTIVENESS SONCE BANGLADESH'S INDEPENDENCE, AND SOME QUESTION WHETHER IT WILL BE ABLE TO PROVIDE STRONG SUPPORT TO CIRDAP. BARD'S CURRENT DIRECTOR ZAKIR HUSSAIN IS A WISE AND ABLE MAN, BUT BARD HAS LACKED THE STRONG LEADERSHIP IT HAS IN THE 1960'S UNDER THE FAMOUS PAKISTANI RURAL DEVELOPER AKHTAR HAMID KHAN. WE UNDERSTAND HUSSAIN MAY RETIRE SOON AND THAT NO DECISION HAS BEEN MADE ABOUT A SUCCESSOR. HARUN UR-RASJID, A BANGLADESHI IN THE FOOD SECURITY DIVISION OF FAO IN ROME, TOLD EMBOFF RECENTLY WHILE ON HOME LEAVE IN DACCA THAT ONE GROUP IN THE BDG HAS ARGUED UNCUCCESSFULLY THAT BE-

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CAUSE OF PROBLEMS AT BARD, CIRDAP SHOULD HAVE BEEN LOCATED AT JAHANGIRNAGAR UNIVERSITY JUST OUTSIDE OF DACCA.

3. ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE OF FORD FOUNDATION, WHICH SUPPORTED BARD IN THE 1960'S , THE ACADEMY'S ORIGINAL GOAL OF ACTION-ORIENTED FIELD RESEARCH HAS NOT BEEN VIGOROUSLY PURSUED; ALSO THE FACULTY HAS BEEN BURDENED BY TOO MANY AD HOC GOVERNMENT TRAINING PROGRAMS. THE RAPID AND UNSUCCESSFUL EXPANSION VOF THE BARD/COMILLA RURAL COOPERATIVE MODEL UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM HAS ALSO HURT BARD'S PRESTIGE. THE FORD FOUNDATION IS FUNDING A NEW STUDY OF BARD BY A TEAM OF FOUR U.S. AND BANGLADESH EXPERTS TO DETERMINE HOW IT CAN BE STRENGTHENED WOD NEW DIRECTIONS IT SHOULD TAKE. THIS STUDY WILL DETERMINE WHETHER FORD WILL INVEST NEW FUNDS IN BARD OR PERHAPS CIRDAP.

4. A.M.A. MUHITH, SECRETARY FOR EXTERNAL RESOURCES DIVISION, MINISTRY OF PLANNING, WHO COORDINATES ALL AID TO BANGLADESH, TOLD EMBOFF RECENTLY HE THOUGHT

BARD MAY WITHER IN THE PRESENCE OF CIRDAP, AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE DECIDED TO DEVOTE MORE OF ITS RESOURCES TO THE NEWER BOGRA RURAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE IN NORTHWEST BANGLADESH. THE BOGRA INSTITUTE HAS BEEN CHOSEN TO RECEIVE A TRAINING GRANT FROM THE WORLD BANK AND AKHTAR HAMID KHAN IS REPORTEDLY RETURNING FROM A YEAR TO WORK THERE AS A CONSULTANT. (OTHERS HERE, INCLUDING HEDAYAT AHMED, DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT, SHARE MUHITH'S VIEW THAT THE BOGRA INSTITUTE NBUR APPEARS TO BE A MORE DYNAMIC INSTITUTION THAN BARD.) MUHITH, WHO HAS SERVED AS BANGLADESH'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO THE ADB, ALSO EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM ABOUT CIRDAP AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTERS IN GENERAL. HE CITED UN-SPONSORED CENTERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FOR STATISTICS AND SOCIAL WELFARE AS EXAMPLES OF INEFFECTUAL REGIONAL PROJECTS WHICH SOMETIMES ATTRACT UNQUALIFIED PEOPLE TO FILL NATIONAL QUOTAS AND WASTE FUNDS ON ACADEMIC PROJECTS OF QUESTIONABLE RELEVANCE.

5. IT IS WIDELY REPORTED THAT BDG MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AZIZUL HUQ, A MAJOR ADVOCATE FOR CIRDAP IN BANGLADESH, WILL BECOME THE DIRECTOR OF CIRDAP. HUQ IS A FORMER DIRECTOR OF BARD. PERHAPS IF HE DOES LEAD CIRDAP HE CAN HELP REHABILITATE BARD AND DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO INSTITUTIONS.

6. IT IS POSSIBLE, OF COURSE, THAT CIRDAP MAY FLOURISH WITHOUT RELYING HEAVILY ON BARD FOR RESOURCES. IN ANY CASE, UNTIL CIRDAP TAKES SHAPE EMBASSY SUPPORTS U.S. DECISION TO RESERVE ANY COMMITMENT TO IT.
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